

AN EXHIBITION OF STUDIES

DRAWINGS BY OLD ENGLISH ARTISTS.

The thought at its birth, that is what *Pere Marcellus* used to call a preliminary drawing. The phirae is happy one and it glances at the most of the happiest phenomena of artistic production with which the connoisseur ever has to do. It is, however, preferable as a work of art to the sophisticated and enriched thought that is when it is sent "finished" from the easel. It is certain that at no stage of its development has it quite the same intimate flavor with which it is instinctive to its crude, ingenuous state. In a preliminary drawing you get the style of the artist unmixed with any self-conscious attributes such as may be put into a picture intended for the public, and by it, more frequently than by any other work of the artist, you are let into the secret of his method.

It is the revealing quality in drawings which does much to enhance the appreciation that is the chief action of the exhibition at the Kewpie Galleries, opened to-day, which is devoted to reproductions made from nature in pencil, ink, and color and similar mediums, by a group of English artists, comprising Turner, Gainsborough, Richard Wilson, David Cox, George Morland, Sir David Wilkie and Seymour Haden. Sixty of the 145 drawings shown are by William Blake, but they have a separate, illustrative interest to which we will return presently. The least significance of the exhibition is derived from the sketches by the seven men named above, whose message, as it is delivered here, differs from Blake's, being more directly artistic and intellectual. The fact should not be lost sight of, however, in connection with the fifty drawings by Turner, that the artist, as they are as useful as they are in the personal direction in which we have spoken, they are still drawings. It is futile to pretend that sketches like No. 46, "Study for Mountains"; No. 47, "Another study for Mountains"; No. 9, "Ullswater"; or No. 45, "Pont Newydd on the Elwy," are pictures, capable of conveying anything like the impression of nature which Turner would have obtained had he intended to make them anything but what they are—notes for future use. Yet we would put these drawings among the most interesting of the Turners because they are mirrors of his artistic personality, given as indications of the basis of his system. In No. 46 and No. 47 the sketchy lines in the mountains in the background marked the annotations with which the sketcher outlined rough "rock" and "rough fields." Still

"neg," "well," its cottage-roof marking "thatch," as if in one corner a memorandum to the effect that "the most distant woods shed light and shadow, the light have very little color, just greenish; the shadows, at nearly if not absolutely, complete darkness." The inscription on No. 60, which has two parts about the stones, is affected more, the bark of the trees light gray, patched with dark moss, the bare parts of the tree nearly the color of the stones.⁸ How many artists are as thoughtful as this in making a hasty memo or chrome sketch? With Turner there is no impatience of minor details, no trusting to memory. He knows the scene is studied and sketched thoroughly, and he is confident his students registered with a reverential regard for truth. Turning to the engravings nearly all three large paintings by Turner—"The Approach to Venice," "Modern Italy" and "Ancient Italy"—paintings of the imaginative and supernaturally luminous sort, which added the word "Turneresque" to the terminology of art criticism, it is almost inconceivable that they were given in the drawing stage. The attention to facts which is observed in the drawings

One is simply reminded that Turner, often as he appears in the light of a builder of vague and beautiful dreams, was nevertheless a man who founded his art on knowledge. He made it his business to ascertain the verities in nature. Only the man who does that can throw the glamour of his imagination about her with impunity. All through the series of Turner's drawings it is obvious that he observed nature narrowly and affectionately. Compare No. 4, "Old Holly Trees," with No. 1, "Study of Oaks," and of both these with No. 7, "Maples in Sunshine," will show how carefully the character of each tree is preserved by the brush. In No. 30, "A Landscape," there is a hint of Turner, the master of aerial perspective, in the vaporous atmosphere, but elsewhere he is a student of structure, gathering substantial material. Most of the sketches are done in pencil, a few are reinforced with light washes of India ink color. The line is generally delicate, and, as every student of Turner's line in the "Libros" will readily believe, very living and expressive.

Gainsborough's drawings are most unlike Turner's in that they give the artist's impression rather than an enumeration of facts. His method apparently was most synthetic than Turner's, more concerned with an approximation to the general effect of a scene than with a close reproduction of its details. It is odd that he should have been animated by a pre-Raphaelite spirit, should present the contrast that they do, that Turner, whom we see here animated by a pre-Raphaelite spirit, should have worked in his oils like an idealist of the idealists, yet always with truth, and that Gainsborough, working with so free a hand in his drawings, should never have attained ideality in his paintings any more than he has attained the convincing freshness of the modern realists to which his undoubtedly naturalistic ideas would have seemed destined to carry him. We need not fear as we look at these drawings that the artist has not found the subject here. I emphasize that the

great artist, generalized freely but to the point where he confronted nature with the purpose of making a rough study, and that he got into his drawings a last touch of the pictorial feeling which is usually the last thing he looked for in sketches of the sort. In No. 60a, "Shepherd and Flock," a crayon sketch of a wooded scene in which there are delightful suggestions of color and atmosphere. In No. 60b, "Landscape with Trees," the trees in the middle distance, there is a primitive dash of the charm which one would find in a painting done by the artist from this sketch. There is even more of the Gainsborough feeling in No. 50, "Landscape," an Indian-ink sketch worked up with color washes, and in some respects, such as gradation of light and perspective, a work that would hold its own beside the best of any Gainsborough paintings. But this is an uncommonly good drawing, and largely helped out by color. The majority of the sketches are, however, of the best of them, like No. 67, "Landscape with Trees on the Banks of a Stream"; No. 72, "A Ruined Cottage"; and No. 65, "Landscape with Figures," in which black and white are and more stenographic in style

Of the drawings by other old artists in this collection, besides Turner, Gainsborough and Blake, that one by Richard Wilson, which is catalogued as a study for his "Phaeton" (of which, by the way, an engraving is shown for the edification of the curious), is the most important, being very characteristic of a graceful, elegant artist, of whom we see so little that every memorial of him, however slight, has a real interest, but one which is given to the airy little landscape scene by David, as well as to the figure of Phaeton by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The drawing, of course, does not belong to the circle which furnished the material for the book, but it is a study for a picture and half a dozen of the drawings for the two supplementary sketches has been assigned to him. In the first place, no drawings by Mr. Haden have been exhibited in public before, and it is a pleasure to meet him in the company of a water colorist, with the most refined appreciation of water effects, in No. 134, "The River Rother, Lancashire," and in No. 144, "The River Mersey, Lancashire," and in No. 145, "Myrtol Hall," a study for one of the best and most celebrated of his etchings.

Mr. Haden promised in his efforts to scrape mozzettixinae from the prepared paper in the lab of Purcell some time xaxaxaxaxaxax.

to, for an exhibition of William Blake's works to do him justice it must be complete or at least very largely so. The three score designs at the Koppell gallery displayed a meagre and fragmentary account of him; they were like a few drops of water from the ocean of beauty and grandeur of his conceptions. In a limited number of his pictures he is a consummate draughtsman, and even in his drawings he has a power which no other artist, even by courtesy, he called a colorist. In the main he has no technical power whatever: both in color and in drawing. He was a man of the "olden days" could not take life word. He is a thinker, or a day-dreamer could say, who imagings, thrown on paper with a facility of which there is nothing astounding, are rarely given to him as illustrations of his own ideas. His conceptions themselves are often of such a nature as to require a key for their explanation. In this exhibition there were seven of the drawings made for the illustration of Blake's "Crane" and three of these especially, "Death," "The Crane," and "The Crane and the Crane," and the body, are noble conceptions between the

spiritual beauty of which and the mind of the beholder is not to intervene, as Schlegel says, "in the originals themselves or in the translations." In Schlegel's view, "the English translation of Goethe's *Die Leiden des Werthers* is a masterpiece of wonderful dramatic power," an "Indian-ink drawing" of "a man of letters," a drawing in the same medium and in the same manner as the original. But against this is to be placed a mass of words that the English artist is absent and on the side of imagination (comparable to the "half-effected flashes" by which the German artist strangely fascinating picture of a patriarch enthroned, but that does little in the long run to clear away Blake's work and which have done so much to envelope Blake's work and which have done so much to envelope Blake's work in the eyes of the English reader. There has not ceased to make him a little study. The unfortunate character of the Blake representation in the English translation is not to be excluded from all other respects is helpful in explaining the